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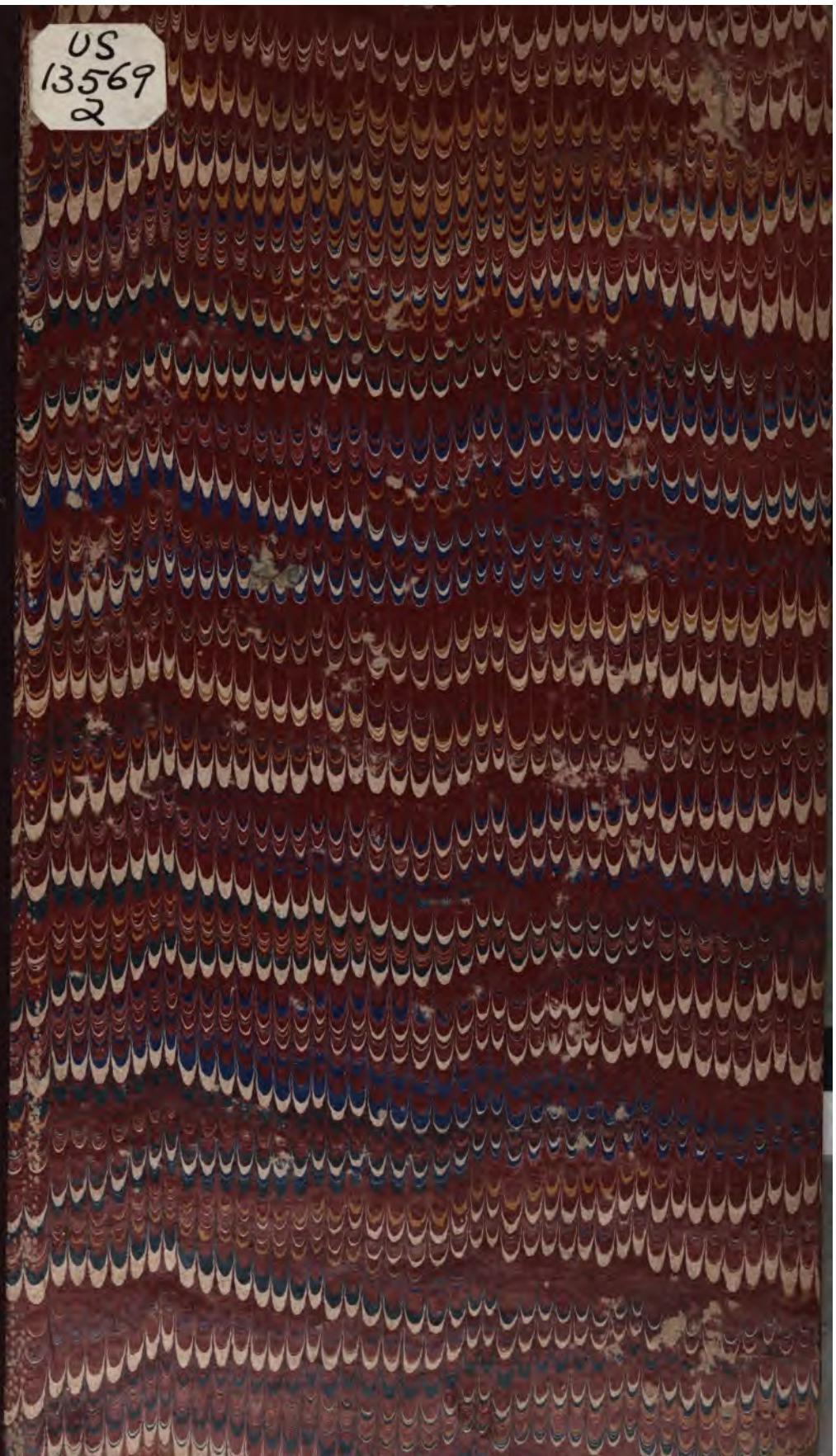
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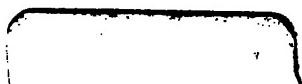
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A Memorial

OF

WILLIAM HARRIS

AND

MARIA HASTINGS CARY.

O

A SERMON

BY
Carlton Albert
REV. C. A. STAPLES.

Preached in the First Congregational Meeting-house,

LEXINGTON, MASS., SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 8, 1883.

Published by Vote of the Society.

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IN MEMORIAM.

"A book of remembrance was written . . . for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name."—MAL. iii., 16.

"Let her own works praise her in the gates."—PROV. xxxi., 31.

IN the year 1798, a boy was born in Boston whose history became identified with that of Lexington in many ways, and who proved a great benefactor to its people. He was the son of Jonathan and Polly (Harris) Cary of that town, and received the name of William Harris Cary. His father's family had removed to Boston from Charlestown where their house was destroyed in the burning of that village at the battle of Bunker Hill. William's father used to relate that he was held up in his mother's arms to witness the awful scene from a safe retreat in Medford, whither the family had fled before the opening of that bloody drama. The father was connected with the business of making masts and spars in a ship-yard; and, at the age of fourteen, William was apprenticed to the same business. A younger brother, Isaac, was apprenticed to a commercial house in Boston engaged in the importation of horn, ivory, shells, and other articles from Africa. The usual term of apprenticeship at that day was for seven years. William served out his time, and became master of the trade of mast and spar making. Isaac,

by working over time, was able at last to buy two years of his apprenticeship, and with characteristic Yankee energy and enterprise immediately started in the same business for himself, in which William joined him soon after the expiration of his apprenticeship. Thus, William virtually threw away seven years of his life in learning a trade which he immediately abandoned for a more attractive occupation; though, no doubt, the experience and skill gained by these years of hand-work with the tools of his trade were of great advantage to him in his subsequent career, bringing him into sympathy with laboring people and giving him a sound judgment in practical affairs. A few incidents are remembered of his boyhood and early manhood, which indicate some of his leading traits and tendencies.

He had a brave and fearless heart where others were in danger and he could help them. It is related of him that, seeing a boy drowning in the rushing tide at Charlestown bridge, he leaped in with his clothes on him, and drew the boy out, thus saving another's life at the peril of his own; and also that he performed a similar service for a woman in the dock of a ship-yard covered with floating timber, who had thrown herself in with the purpose of self-destruction. This perilous act was regarded by those who saw it as an instance of self-forgetful heroism, which proved him to be a young man of great strength and courage. He is also spoken of as having a resolute and determined spirit. Whatever he attempted to do was sure to be accomplished. No difficulties daunted him, no labors discouraged

him. He resolved, when a poor lad working in the ship-yard, that, if he ever earned a dollar, he would save a part of it to place himself upon an independent foundation in life. It is also reported of him that he was devoted to his mother, and faithful in serving her in the heavy household cares which belonged to her lot. "Mother," said he, "I wish I was a girl, that I might do more to help you." All the education which he received was obtained in the common schools before he was fourteen years of age. But he is remembered as a lad of bright, quick mind, equal to the best in his class, and ambitious to excel in the school studies. While serving his apprenticeship, he attended an evening school for some time, earning money at extra hours to pay his tuition, and also gained access to the books of a circulating library in the same way. These particulars sum up what we know of the early life of William H. Cary. They indicate that he was industrious in his work, prudent in the use of the little that he was able to earn, fearless of danger where he could help others, anxious to get as good an education as possible without having much opportunity, and glad for a chance to lighten the burdens of his mother, who had a large family to work for and not much help, except from her boys; but, in these qualities, we have the making of a strong, enterprising, useful, and good man. He had his own way to make in the world, with nothing to depend upon but hard work, good management, and a pure and upright character. Of a young man born in such a home, brought up to earn his own living by the work of his hands, given the essential

things of a fair education, trained to speak the truth and revere and worship God, we may always expect to hear a good account in after life. William's mother died before he had completed his apprenticeship. His father married for a third wife the second daughter of Deacon Isaac Hastings of Lexington, and subsequently retired from the ship-yard in Boston, bought a farm here on the Lincoln road called the Peake Place, and spent the remaining years of his life in this town, dying in 1855, at the advanced age of eighty-six.

We turn now to the active business life of William. With his brother Isaac, he established a small retail business in Boston, which they carried on together for several years, buying from the importers in Salem shells, horn, ivory, and other goods belonging to this class of merchandise, bringing them to their store in Boston, and selling to their customers. Salem was then the principal port of New England for the East India trade. Boston, and even New York, went to Salem for goods imported from Africa and the farthest East. Her merchants and ships held a large portion of this profitable commerce. Here, these young men, having passed but little beyond their majority, began a career in which they attained an honorable success. They had no ambition to make a great show in the beginning. They were content to commence in the smallest way, on their own little capital, and by careful planning and faithful working build a secure foundation and rise gradually to larger things. We see them driving backward and forward in their one-horse wagon be-

tween Boston and Salem, carrying the few dollars they could spare down and bringing back a little load of goods, which filled up their store and was enough to supply their trade for several days or weeks, doing all the work themselves, living in the plainest style, saving something out of every dollar that passed through their hands, and enlarging their business with their growing capital and trade. Honest buying and selling, good and faithful work, expenses kept rigidly down below the income, a name for promptness and efficiency which won friends everywhere, were the foundations of a business which ultimately became the largest and the most prosperous in the country, in this department of trade.

Such is the beginning and such are the facts upon which the highest and best success is always built up. Peter Cooper, who has left behind a monument so noble and a name so bright, is an eminent illustration of the same principles. Out of an humble, cramped condition in boyhood, through a discipline of hard work and self-conquest, he rose to be one of the most useful and influential men of our country. He made a reputation in early manhood for honest work, sagacious enterprise, and unwavering fidelity to duty, which followed him as long as he lived. When people bought an article of Peter Cooper, they knew that there was no cheating in it. It was sound in quality and quantity, exactly what it professed to be. A success like that is a lasting honor. In winning it, a man wins what is far better than success, far better than reputation,—a noble character.

But the Cary brothers found that the business of

the country was being drawn, more and more, away from its old centres to New York, the rapidly growing metropolis of the nation; and, accordingly, they established a branch in that city in the year 1828, of which William took charge, and soon afterward, separating from his brother, he assumed the sole management and control of it. Here he continued for thirty-two years, or until the close of his life, and became the leading importer and merchant of New York in this department of goods.

It is not my purpose to speak in detail of his subsequent career, for it has been already foreshadowed. The principles that guided him in life, the name he won in that city and in Brooklyn—where he soon took up his residence—for integrity, ability, and manliness, gave him great influence in financial, benevolent, and civil affairs. He was a man to be trusted everywhere. In charge of a great and growing business which absorbed much of his time and energy, a director in many moneyed and charitable institutions, deeply interested in the public schools and other means of guiding and elevating children, a generous giver and worker in his own church, looked up to as a wise counsellor and friend by many people, faithful in all his relations to society, to his country, and to his family,—such was the manhood of William H. Cary, as remembered by those who knew him most intimately. He had great ability for business. His judgment was sound and true. His methods were straight and clean. His enterprises were far-reaching and sagacious; but, more than these, he was not only a man of a clear head, but of a kind and gener-

ous heart,—in sympathy with the working people around him, understanding their trials and needs, anxious to cheer their lot, and open the way for them to a brighter and happier life. He was a plain man, with no ambition for display. He aimed to be faithful to God and man, according to the best of his ability; and he cared for no reward but the consciousness that he had done his duty.

I have heard him spoken of as very fond of children, and delighting to bring them around him in his home and make them happy. His adopted daughter and his nieces speak of his genial and pleasant ways, making everybody feel at home when visiting him.

However hard and trying the daily work, when he entered his house it was all laid off, and he was a child again with the children. Especially do they speak of their delight in the summer vacation at his home in Lexington, where he came for many years to pass a few weeks amid its charming scenery. It was the pleasantest part of the year to them in its freedom and recreation, cheered by his sympathy and kindness.

In his religious convictions, William Cary was a devoted Unitarian. He was one of the founders of the First Church in Brooklyn. When the present beautiful edifice was erected, he watched over the building of it with the same interest and fidelity that he would have shown had it been his own dwelling. Every morning, he went to see what progress had been made, and take note of the manner in which the work was done. In this church, he was a faithful worshipper. Hardly a Sunday passed, says his

pastor, Dr. Farley, when he was not seen in the Sunday-school encouraging teachers and scholars by his presence. His place in the congregation was never vacant, if it was possible for him to be there. A steady friend and faithful counsellor of the minister; a generous giver and worker for the interests of the Church and the faith; an humble disciple of Jesus, revering his word and seeking to be guided by his spirit,—such was the character that he bore in the religious communion to which he belonged. I speak of these things, not supposing that he was faultless and perfect. Jesus himself disclaimed this, when he said, “None is good but one, that is God.” No doubt, William Cary had his failings: none realized this, probably, more keenly than he; none would be more averse to claim any superior virtue or to be praised for his deeds and his character. But I speak of these things, because they show how he appeared to the men and women about him. And I am glad to speak of them, because they show that a man may unite a good character for business with fidelity to righteousness, keep a sound head and a kind heart, win a high success in his occupation or profession, and be faithful in his duties to his fellow-men and his God; rise from an humble condition; where there are few favoring circumstances, by the force of his character and the blessing of God to the highest position in business and social life, and not become hard, grasping, selfish, fond of vulgar display, and unmindful of his responsibility to God in the use of his wealth. Such an example deserves to be honored. It is an inspiration and help to every

young man who means to live honestly and purely, and yet attain a high success. It strengthens the cause of integrity in business, of simplicity and sincerity in social life, and of fidelity in religious principle and faith. Let it be held up before our children, to stimulate them to seek the best things in the best way, and be satisfied with no success won by the sacrifice of a pure and loving heart.

Mr. Cary passed away, after a brief illness, in February, 1861, in the sixty-third year of his life. His death was sudden and unexpected, a crushing blow to his family and a great surprise to a large circle of business acquaintances and friends. He had accumulated a large estate, but left no will directing what disposition should be made of it. Some brief memoranda were found among his papers, indicating his intentions in some particulars, which were sacredly followed by Mrs. Cary, so far as it was possible. Though in no way legally binding upon her, she regarded the execution of his purposes, not only as a solemn obligation, but as a sacred privilege and joy. It became the work of her widowed life to carry out his every wish, so far as it could be ascertained and so far as her means would allow.

I turn now to speak of her who was his devoted and loving wife for thirty-two years, and through whom there have come to this town many noble benefactions from his estate.

Maria Hastings, born March 1, 1801, was the youngest daughter of Isaac and Sarah (Stearns) Hastings, of Lexington. Her father was chosen deacon of this church in 1808, and served until his death, in

1831. He was one of Captain Parker's company of minute men, who gathered on Lexington Common to resist the invaders on the 19th of April, 1775; and he served in the campaign which ended in the surrender of Burgoyne, and in other scenes of the war. The grandfather, Samuel Hastings, who lived to be the patriarch of Lexington, dying at the advanced age of ninety-nine years, was also on the common with Captain Parker, and with the troops at Cambridge when Washington took command of the American army. Mrs. Cary came of a race of sturdy, independent farmers,—men and women who were brought up in the district school and the parish church, and trained in the hard work and the plain life of an agricultural community. They had few books to read; they had little society, except that of the neighboring farmers; they had little leisure and few amusements. All were reared to the work of the farm or the household, in habits of economy and thrift, and to "fear God and keep his commandments." These things have proved, in the history of New England families, the best preparation for lives of intelligence, usefulness, and piety.

Maria Hastings grew up to womanhood under such influences, learning to bear the burdens of household care, knowing the worth of money and how to make it go farthest in providing for the necessities and comforts of a family,—a knowledge only to be gained by earning money in hard work, and using it under such a discipline. It is an experience that lays a good foundation for success in any occupation, and fits a man or woman to be the head of a business and a home.

Her education, like that of her husband, was obtained in the common school. It is not known that she ever attended any other than that of the district in which her father lived, and where her brothers and sisters received their only school education. The school was kept open for two months, probably, in summer and three months in winter. The winter session was often taught by a young man from the college, who thus paid his expenses in part by the winter's work, and whose only aim was to do as much study for himself and save as much money as possible. But, in many instances, these young men from college kindled a flame in the minds of their pupils by their enthusiasm for learning, which burned brighter and brighter as long as they lived. Theodore Parker, living in the same neighborhood as Maria Hastings and contemporary with her in school, was thus inspired to seek an education, and guided in his studies by a young man who came to teach there for the winter. Short as the district schools were seventy years ago, fragmentary and poor as the teaching was in them, where fifty or sixty pupils were often in charge of one teacher, yet some sound and good work was done. A few fundamental things were thoroughly learned, and an impetus often given to the mind, which remained in after years, broadening and deepening its power and leading to honorable attainments. Many of our strongest and best men have received their education mainly in these district schools. Men and women who have risen to fill the highest places in business, political, and social life; men and women who have been counted among the

most intelligent and useful citizens,—look to the common school as an institution to which they owe a debt of gratitude and of service not easily discharged.

William H. Cary and Maria Hastings were united in marriage, as our church records show, on May 4, 1828, by Rev. Charles Briggs, minister of Lexington. They began housekeeping in New York, but soon removed to Brooklyn, where they resided until the close of their lives. It was a true and happy union. In their beautiful home, where they delighted to keep a group of merry children always about them, devoted to each other, interested in works of charity, surrounded by relatives and friends, the years passed swiftly away, binding them more tenderly and closely together. As I have already said, the tie was suddenly sundered on earth, after thirty-two years of beautiful wedded life, to be again joined, at the end of twenty years' separation, in the immortal world. She was a true helpmeet to her husband, the worthy wife of a good and noble man. His death was a terrible bereavement, which the lapse of years could not heal. Borne with the serenity and patience of Christian faith, still the void and loneliness remained; and happy to her was the hour when "the angel with the amaranthine wreath" came to take her to the heavenly home. As I have already said, it was the delight of Mrs. Cary to fulfil, as far as she could know them, the wishes of her husband in regard to the disposition of his wealth. In sustaining the institutions and charities which he had been interested in, ministering to the wants of the neglected and suffering, opening the way to a higher and happier life for the

abandoned children of the city, and helping on the work of their church and denomination, she found the sweetest satisfaction and joy. For many years, in feebleness and suffering, this was her earnest thought and purpose,—how to use this money in wise and noble ways, how to draw most from it for the good of her fellow-beings, how to discharge this great responsibility as a faithful Christian woman, in the service of God and his children.

Naturally, she turned with tender interest to the home of her ancestors and the place of her birth. The old homestead had been bought by her husband, and greatly improved and beautified for a summer residence. Here she delighted to come and spend many months in the year among the scenes of her childhood and youth; but more than this: she honored and loved the old town, was proud of its history, and wanted to give the events and characters that had made it distinguished in our country's annals the prominence and glory which rightfully belonged to them; and, more than this, she was anxious that the people living here now and to live here in generations to come should be worthy to fill the places of those who have passed away; that the intellectual, moral, and religious life of the town should not sink down to a lower plane and dishonor the old history, but rise to a higher plane; that its young men and women should grow up with the best advantages of improvement, to take the places of their fathers and mothers, and keep the old record still bright and the life here still strong, pure, and true. Hence, she took a deep interest in whatever concerned the wel-

fare of the people and the honor of the town. She gave generously and constantly for objects identified with its prosperity and good. Toward its monumental tablets and statues in honor of those who gave their lives for freedom and country here, she contributed \$4,000, and \$10,000 toward the erection of the Town Hall. To all the churches of the town, she was a generous helper and friend. Especially to this church, dear to her as the religious home of her ancestors, dear to her, also, because it represented the faith that she cherished and loved, in which she found comfort and guidance for the duties and trials of life, — to this church where she delighted to worship and join in the simple and beautiful rites of our religion, she was a munificent benefactress. These tablets upon the wall, chaste and beautiful, glowing with passages of hope, comfort, and faith from the Bible, are her gifts. In the hour of discouragement and despondency, when an old indebtedness was paralyzing the life of the society, a gift of \$1,000 from her brought new courage and hope to the people, and inspired them to throw off the crushing burden. Again and again was the same hand outstretched to aid us; and, not content to have her benefactions cease with her life here, the same hand is to drop its blessing for generations to come through her last bequest of \$5,000; but I turn from this record of charity to church and town, to speak in conclusion of what seems to me greatest and best of all. I mean the public library which bears her name.

The thought often comes to me as I look over the eight or ten thousand volumes upon its shelves, em-

= facing many of the best books of history, biography,
= travels, novels, science, philosophy, and religion in
= the English language, and when I examine from
= month to month the choice and fascinating books
= that are added to it at the rate of six or seven hun-
= dred volumes a year, what a magnificent gift this is
= to our town; what a privilege is here provided for
= our people without money and without price; what
= an opportunity for every young man and woman in
= this town to become acquainted with the best
= thought and knowledge of all the ages! What a
= fountain of inspiration and delight this library would
= have been to some of the people who have lived here
in the past, hungering and thirsting for books which
could not be had in the town, and leading a half-
starved intellectual life for the want of them. I think
of that bright, eager boy, Theodore Parker, born on
one of the hardest and poorest farms, and compelled
to work from sunrise till sunset to raise bread for the
family, coming to the old parish library in the village
to get some book to read in the evenings, and find-
ing little or nothing of any interest to a boy, yet
devouring the hard, dry works of philosophy and
religion with the relish of a starving man,—reading
everything he could lay his hands on, and storing it
up in a memory that never let anything slip, work-
ing himself through college and through the Divinity
School by sheer force of will and hunger for knowl-
edge, to become a man of vast and varied learning;
and I wonder what that life would have been, had
such a library as this been open to him and had such
an inspiration and help been given him; and I look

forward to the coming generations, and think of the incalculable good which is to come from this princely benefaction to our town, wondering what the Cary Library will become as it goes on year after year enlarging its treasures and diffusing wider and wider its benefits. In this way, I seem to gain some appreciation of the value of this gift in its influence upon the life and character of our people. How many weary bodies and minds will be refreshed by these books! How many feeble and suffering people will be soothed and lifted above the thought of their pain into a world of freedom and beauty! How many young souls will be fired with a generous ambition for learning and excellence by the great minds whose treasures are here brought before them! Sometimes, as I gaze upon the calm, strong, refined face of Mrs. Cary, looking down upon young and old that come to the library for intellectual stimulus and refreshment, the face of the woman whose benefactions have given us this fountain of living waters; and, also, upon the strongly marked yet noble features of Mr. Cary, whose enterprise, industry, and faithfulness were the means by which it was founded and will ever be sustained,—I think of the satisfaction and joy which this stream of blessing must yield to their souls in the immortal world. Here let their names be held in grateful and loving remembrance. Here, through long generations to come, life will be more wise, broad, sweet, and happy for the lives of William Cary and Maria Hastings. Here, they have the noblest monument that can be reared to perpetuate the memory of man,—an institution that will be a

source of light, comfort, and inspiration to thousands and thousands of God's children, a monument builded out of the better thoughts, aims, and characters which this library will help to create. Thus, their works shall ever praise them in the gates.

Mrs. Cary's gifts to the library amount to \$11,000, which constitutes a permanent fund for the purchase of books. The aggregate of all her gifts to the town amounts to more than \$35,000, including the library and the churches. And this is but a small part of what she bestowed upon other charitable, educational, and religious objects in Brooklyn and in different parts of the country. Her final bequests embrace, in addition to her church and denomination, a large number of institutions for the care of the poor, the sick, the unfortunate, without regard to sect or race, as though she only thought of the best ways to cheer, elevate, and save her fellow-beings. It was not her church forms and opinions that she cared most for, dearly as she loved them, but the ignorant, suffering, wandering children of God,—her brothers and sisters, whose hard lot she would make a little brighter. To these, she sent the cup of cold water to cheer their thirsty, fainting spirits in a great many ways, reaching out a hand of blessing to them through all the generations to come.

Her earthly journey closed suddenly Oct. 31, 1881, just as she returned to her Brooklyn home, after a long and pleasant summer passed here. It was a peaceful close of a long, useful, and noble life. From the farmer's home into which she was born, amid whose straitened and hard conditions she grew up to

womanhood, she rose to fill a large place in the benevolent, educational, and religious enterprises of a great city. With ample means of gratifying every wish that the love of luxury and social display could awaken, she kept her simplicity of character, and sought to use her wealth in the cause of humanity, righteousness, and truth. And so, passing on in the consciousness of having tried to do her duty and in the faith of a sincere and humble Christian, her death was the rising of the immortal being to broader, brighter, happier life. With the quaint old poet Herbert, we may say of her memory,

“The religious actions of the just
Smell sweet in death, and blossom in the dust.”





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